

2007  
SOUTHWEST AREA  
INTERAGENCY SINGLE ENGINE AIRTANKER  
OPERATING PLAN



**Southwest Area Interagency SEAT Operating Plan  
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## **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this plan is to provide supplemental guidance to established policy in order to standardize interagency Single Engine Airtanker (SEAT) operations conducted in the Southwest Area. This plan promotes interagency cooperation that works towards ensuring all agencies utilizing SEATs in the Southwest area focus on conducting safe and effective SEAT operations.

***This plan applies only to interagency SEAT operations.*** Agencies acting unilaterally within their own jurisdiction are strongly encouraged to follow this plan but are not required to do so.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

This plan will:

- Provide supplemental guidance to dispatchers, aviation staff, fire personnel, and contract support personnel involved in Single Engine Airtanker (SEAT) operations.
- Outline and standardized the roles and duties of agency personnel responsible for SEAT operations.
- Identify and to the extent possible standardize SEAT operational procedures
- Identify key elements that ensure safe and effective SEAT operations all agencies can agree upon.
- Create a vehicle that allows personnel participating in SEAT operations an avenue to provide feedback, evaluations and recommendations.
- Create a vehicle that helps disseminate information to all personnel involved in SEAT operations.

## **III. AUTHORITY:**

This plan is authorized and approved by the Southwest Area Coordinating Group, based upon authority granted by that group's charter.

## **IV. PLAN REVISION AND SIGNING AUTHORITY:**

This plan will be reviewed and updated annually by the SWA Aviation Committee. A copy of the plan will be signed as recommended by the current Chair of the SWA Aviation Committee, and approved by the current Chair of the Southwest Area Coordinating Group.

## **V. SOUTHWEST AREA GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES:**

The Southwest Area is delineated in the Southwest Area Mobilization Guide. The boundary includes the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas and Oklahoma west of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian.

## **VI. PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:**

The federal and state agencies participating in this Southwest Area SEAT operating plan are: USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI National Park Service, USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona State Land Department, State of New Mexico (Forestry Division) and the State of Texas (Texas Forest Service).

## **VII. INTRODUCTION:**

The Southwest geographic area contains a wide variety of state and federal agencies with different missions, goals and objectives for managing their natural resources. The Southwest has one of the most diverse environments with fuel types ranging from low grass lands to mixed conifer with significant elevation changes throughout the Southwest. Combining the environmental factors with complex military airspace, international border operations, and extended fire seasons, the area has all the key components that contribute to a high risk environment for aviation operations.

With this in mind it is essential that every effort is made to unite all aspects of aviation planning, execution, and monitoring operational procedures to ensure that all users work together to provide an environment that focuses on safe, efficient and effective SEAT operations.

## **VIII. KEY SAFETY COMPONENTS:**

Below are components that have been identified by the participating agencies as key elements for safe and effective SEAT operations.

- A. Standardized policy documents utilized by all agencies
- B. Roles and responsibilities defined for the using agencies
- C. SEAT Manager / SEAT Coordinator qualifications defined
- D. Standardization of SEAT aircraft utilized in the Southwest Area
- E. Standardized briefings given to SEAT Managers
- F. Standardized information given for dispatching SEATs
- G. Standardization of retardant / suppressant materials utilized
- H. Key elements required for safe and effective SEAT base operations
- I. Standardized safety reporting system utilized by all agencies
- J. Central point established for information dissemination
- K. Mechanism established for a feedback and monitoring loop

### **COMPONENT A: Standardized Policy Document Utilized by all Agencies**

All interagency SEAT operations conducted in the Southwest area will adhere to the guidelines established in the Interagency Single Engine Airtanker Guide (ISOG), and the appropriate SEAT contract.

Copies of the ISOG and the required forms can be found on the web at:

<http://www.fire.blm.gov/aviation/airops.htm>

Individual agencies may have additional policy documents that pertain to SEAT operations. These policies must not conflict with the ISOG and SEAT contract. It is the responsibility of the individual agency to provide additional guidance to the SEAT Managers during their initial briefing.

## **COMPONENT B: Agency Roles and Responsibilities Defined for Using Agencies**

### **SWA Aviation Committee will:**

- Annually review and recommend any changes to this plan, and present to SWCG.
- Act as a focal point for the collection and analysis of any evaluations, reviews, inspections, safecomms, etc, generated for SEAT operations conducted in the Southwest Area.
- Act as a central point to collect, consolidated and forward any recommendations to the BLM National SEAT Program Manager for possible ISOG revisions. Recommendations will also be communicated in advance, when possible, to the SWCG.
- Annually review and forward any recommendations to the Southwest Area Coordinating Group for possible revision pertinent to SEAT operations for the:
  - Southwest Area Mobilization Guide
  - Interagency Standards Fire and Aviation Operations
  - Interagency Airtanker Base Operations Guide
- Provide technical operational advice to the Southwest Area MAC Group, and assistance in priority allocation of SEAT resources as requested

### **Fire Manager or Agency Aviation Manager:**

All interagency SEAT operations conducted with the Southwest Area will be consistent with ISOG and under the direction the ordering unit's Fire Management Officer, Agency Aviation Manager or their designee. The Fire or Aviation Manager is responsible for the following duties:

- Coordinates efforts with dispatch personnel to ensure the correct type of SEAT is ordered within their agency specific requirements.
- Coordinates with the dispatch personnel to order the SEAT Manager and any other miscellaneous overhead that may be needed for the SEAT operation.
- Ensures that appropriate retardant and water supplies are available for conducting SEAT operations.
- Verifies that the SEAT Manager has received an initial briefing for conducting SEAT operations on their unit. The initial briefing must cover the elements outlined in the "Initial Pilot / Manager Briefing" checklist, as required by the Interagency Single Engine Air Tanker Guide (ISOG). The using agency may provide the SEAT Manager with additional briefing elements that are specific to their agency or aviation operations.
- Identifies or designates the primary points of contact for the SEAT Manager to interface with on all aspects of their operations.
- Ensures that the SEAT Manager, pilot and support personnel have all the necessary information to conduct or receive a daily briefing.
- Coordinates with the SEAT Manager and dispatch personnel to provide any logistical support identified for the SEAT operation.
- Coordinates with the SEAT Manager, pilot(s), and support personnel on any safety issue or concerns, and ensure that steps have been taken to resolve and monitor safety concerns or issues.

- Monitors the effectiveness of the SEAT drops. Helps the SEAT pilot and ground personnel work together to enhance the effectiveness or general use of the SEAT to achieve incident goals and objectives.
- Ensures that SEAT operations are coordinated with other aviation activities on or near the incident.
- Verifies that the SEAT Manager conducts a close out with the using agency at the end of their assignment.

### **COMPONENT C: SEAT Managers and SEAT Coordinator Qualifications**

#### **SEAT Manager (SEMG):**

All SEAT Managers and trainees will meet the training and experience requirements outlined in the Interagency Single Engine Air Tanker Guide (ISOG). Individual agencies are responsible for ensuring their employees meet the minimum qualifications outlined in PMS 310-1 and that these are appropriately recorded within the agency's qualification documentation database. Individual agencies may have additional requirements for their SEAT Managers but they may not establish lesser requirements than those outlined in PMS 310-1. All SEAT Managers and trainees must have their qualification displayed on their agency's Incident Qualification Card. The Incident Qualification Card must be carried with the employee on all incidents.

SEAT Manager duties are described in the ISOG. Additional duties or tasks pertinent to SEAT operations may be identified to the SEAT Manager by the using agency during their initial briefing. Any additional duties or tasks identified must not interfere with their ability to perform the tasks outlined in the ISOG.

#### **SEAT Coordinator (SECO):**

All SEAT Coordinators (SECO) and trainees will meet the training and experience requirements outlined in the ISOG. All SECO's mobilized for the Southwest area will be done in accordance with the procedures outlined in the ISOG and the SWA Mobilization Guide.

#### **Agency Specific Guidelines for the Southwest Area:**

State agencies may internally mobilize personnel to oversee and coordinate their SEAT operations for planning and logistical support.

### **COMPONENT D: Standardized Aircraft Utilized in the Southwest Area**

#### **National Resources:**

All Exclusive Use and Call-When-Needed (CWN) SEATs are national resources. The 2006 National SEAT CWN Source List was formatted to list vendors under their Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) where their home base office is located. During peak fire season, a National SEAT Coordinator will assist the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) to track the movement of all SEATs.

**Ordering a SEAT within the GACC:**

Units may order a SEAT *directly* from a vendor who is officially listed in their GACC from the National SEAT CWN Source List. The unit's dispatch office must coordinate with the aircraft desk at the Southwest Area Coordination Center (SWCC) to ensure the proper procedures are followed up in the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS).

**Ordering a SEAT from outside the GACC:**

If there are no longer any SEATs available within the southwest GACC, then all orders for additional SEATs must be processed through the established dispatch channels from SWCC and NICC.

**SEAT Contracts:**

All SEAT pilots, aircraft and support vehicles will have their current Interagency Data Cards in their possession.

SEATs contracted and flown on interagency fires will utilize the federal National Call-When-Needed (CWN) SEAT Contract or individual federal Exclusive Use SEAT Contracts.

Both types of contracts are written by the Department of Interior, Aviation Management (DOI-AM). DOI-AM publishes a National SEAT CWN Source List available from their web site that displays the aircraft on the National CWN SEAT Contract. Information about the individual Exclusive Use Contracts based in the Southwest area can be found in the current Southwest Area Mobilization Guide.

Individual States may work with the DOI-AM on a case by case basis to contract SEAT aircraft services under a different type of contact. If these contracts are utilized by the States, the aircraft, support vehicles and pilots must still have the approved Interagency Date Card, and agree to the provisions in the federal contracts to be flown on or mixed with other aircraft on interagency fires.

The SEAT Manager must verify the type of contact that is being used and check the pilot, support vehicle and aircraft Interagency Data Cards. If there are any discrepancies in the cards, the aircraft or pilot will not be used until these issues are resolved.

*Due to the vast amount of different types of fuels, terrain, elevations and areas of operations, agency specific guidelines have been established to help the agency meet their objectives and needs:*

Agency	Agency Specific Guidelines for the Southwest Area
Region-3 Forest Service	Forest Service units will only order turbine powered SEAT aircraft for fires on USDA-FS lands. Reciprocating SEAT aircraft from other agencies shall only be used at or below 5500 feet pressure altitude.
Texas Forest Service	The Texas Forest Service will only order turbine powered SEATs that can carry 450 gallons or more of retardant to their fires.

## **COMPONENT E: Standardized Briefing Elements**

In order to ensure that SEAT Managers, pilots and support personnel receive consistent and critical information to safely perform their jobs, two types of briefings have been identified and will be utilized on interagency incidents:

- **Initial Pilot/Manager Briefing**
- **Daily Briefing**

### **Initial Pilot/Manager Briefing:**

The initial briefing must cover the elements outlined in the “Initial Pilot / Manager Briefing” checklist, as required by the ISOG. The checklist can be found on the BLM National SEAT web site at <http://www.fire.blm.gov/aviation/airops.htm>. The using agency may provide the SEAT Manager with additional briefing elements that are specific to their agency or aviation operations.

### **Daily Briefing:**

The using agency must ensure that the SEAT Manager, pilot and support personnel receive a briefing each day. The agency can provide personnel to conduct a briefing, or supply the SEAT Manager with the necessary information to conduct their own. The *minimum* elements of the daily briefing must consist of:

- **Daily Intelligence:** *(Review the fire weather, planning levels, situation reports, and updates on the current fire status.)*
- **Airspace Deconfliction:** *(Updates on any new or existing Temporary Flight Restrictions, TFR's, in the area, and any changes to the aerial hazard map)*
- **Communications:** *(Updates on any changes or additional frequencies)*
- **Operations:** *(Updates on changes with additional aircraft or aviation overhead, and a review on any planned aerial or ground mission that may affect SEATs.)*
- **Safety:** *(Relay any safety messages generated for the fire and aviation operations.)*

## **COMPONENT F: Standardize Information Given for Dispatching SEATs:**

All dispatches for SEAT aircraft will be conducted through the SEAT Manager that has been assigned operational control of the SEAT. Airtanker Base Managers are authorized to oversee SEAT operations, without the presence of the SEAT Manager, while they are assigned to work out of their base. Dispatches can be conducted through the Airtanker Base Manager provided they have coordinated with the assigned SEAT Manager. SEAT Managers are required by the ISOG to ensure that the pilot receives a complete mission briefing prior to departure. The Aircraft Dispatch Form (NFES #2657) was designed for SEAT operations, and contains all the pertinent information that the SEAT Manager and Airtanker Base Managers will need to conduct their mission briefing. It is *recommended* that all agencies use this form to help standardize the critical information needed for dispatching the SEAT.

SEATs are required by contract to be ready for takeoff/dispatch within 15 minutes or longer if authorized by the government. The 15 minutes response time requirement is *after* the SEAT pilot receives the dispatch and the complete mission briefing. **Note:** *Care should be taken by all personnel involved in dispatching aircraft to place the emphasis on ensuring the pilot receives and clearly understands all components of the mission briefing rather than the response time requirements.*



SEAT dispatches must include the following *minimum* information:

- Fire name and number
- Lat/Long (*degrees, minutes, seconds*) and / or VOR radial and distance to fire.
- Elevation of the fire.
- Air-to-Air contact and frequency
- Air-to-Ground contact and frequency
- Other aviation resources order, inbound or over the fire.
- Any known aerial hazards
- Airspace deconfliction information (military routes, TFRs, etc)
- Reload base information.

### **COMPONENT G: Standardized Retardant / Suppressant Materials Utilized**

Only products approved and listed on the National Retardant Contract will be utilized. All agencies utilizing these products will participate in the Lot Acceptance / Quality Assurance (LA/QA) Program, as required by the National Retardant Contract. A list of approved products can be found on the Forest Service web site: Wildland Fire Chemical System (WFCS) <http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/fire/> Units without easy internet access should make hard copies of these guides before the fire season, and periodically check to insure their currency.

### **COMPONENT H: Key Elements Required for Safe and Effective SEAT Base Operations**

SEATs can be operated out of a variety of locations throughout the Southwest. Locations can vary greatly from well established air tanker bases to undeveloped isolated airstrips. No matter what type of base or locations SEATs are working from, minimum standards have been established to help ensure safe and effective operations:

- All runways and ramp areas will be utilized with the approval of the pilot.
- All locations must establish and maintain radio communications as required by the ISOG, the incident communications plan, the SWA Mobilization Guide, and the aircraft contract.
- The using agency must ensure that the appropriate arrangements have been made for use of the respective ground sites.
- The SEAT Manager must be provided a briefing about the site location by using agency personnel prior to air operations.
- A crash/rescue plan must be identified or developed for the site.
- A hazmat plan must be identified or developed for the site.
- A Risk Management Worksheet (RMW) or Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) must be available to the SEAT Manager to review and use at established SEAT bases.
- Adequate facilities and logistical support must be in place to ensure the welfare and safety of all personnel that are assigned to the SEAT operation.
- An assessment of security concerns or issues must be made by the using agency

<i>Agency specific guidelines have been established by the following agency to help them meet their objectives and needs:</i>	
Agency	Agency Specific Guidelines for the Southwest Area
Region-3 Forest Service	Forest Service units will not operate SEAT aircraft off roads or highways.
Texas Forest Service	SEAT operations will be conducted at an approved airport or under the guidelines for off airport use with the approval of the AMO.
National Park Service	SEAT operations from other than an established airstrip require advance approval by the IMR Aviation Manager

### **COMPONENT I: Standardized Safety Reporting System Utilized by all Agencies**

The safety and welfare of personnel is of the utmost importance in any aviation operation. An active program of hazard identification and reporting is critical for trend analysis and accident prevention.

Employees and contractors are responsible for continually monitoring all aspects of the SEAT operation for existing or potential hazards, and reporting them on a Safecom. A Safecom is an aviation communique that is used to report any condition, act, observation or maintenance problem that may have the potential to cause an aviation related mishap. The Safecom web site can be accessed at: <http://www.safecom.gov/default.asp> . The using agency is responsible for briefing the SEAT Manager on the appropriate submission procedures that have been established for their agency or unit.

### **COMPONENT J: Central Point Established for Information Dissemination**

One of the key factors that helps unite multiple agencies located in a large geographic area is to establish a central point for information to be disseminated. Sharing information and having procedures/methods in place to effectively notify all personnel over a large geographical area of any safety concerns, issues or notices is an invaluable tool.

The SWA Aviation Committee will sponsor a site on the Southwest Area web site. Posting information to the web site will be done through a designated member of the SWA Aviation Committee. The minimum SEAT information that will be displayed on the web site is:

- Direct link to the BLM National SEAT website and to the Aviation Management Directorate website
- Safety Alerts, Bulletins, or Notices pertinent to SEAT operations.
- Copy of the Southwest Area Interagency SEAT Operating Plan
- Copy of the Southwest Area Mobile SEAT Base Plan
- Copies of RWA or JHA for SEAT Manager and SEAT Base Operations

## **COMPONENT K: Mechanism Establish for a Feedback and Monitoring Loop**

*(Reserved for future development)*

### **IX. PLANNING LEVELS:**

The Southwest Area Coordinating Group is responsible for establishing area wide priorities and allocating scarce resources, including SEATs. The SWA Aviation Committee will provide the Coordinating Group with technical advice regarding SEAT use and potential priorities as requested by the Coordinating Group.

Recommended: /s/ E. David Underwood  
Chair, SWA Aviation committee

Approved: /s/ Bob Lineback  
Bob Lineback  
Chair, Southwest Coordinating Group